Conference on Disarmament

English

Final record of the one thousand four hundred and thirty-fourth plenary meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 23 January 2018, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha .....(Sri Lanka)

GE.18-07478 (E) 210918 250918

1807478

Please recycle

The President: Excellencies, dear colleagues, Ms. Nakamitsu, Ms. Kaspersen, ladies and gentlemen, let me start off by extending to all of you my best wishes for the new year. It is an honour for me to be the first President of the 2018 session. Before we proceed with the next item in the order of business for the day, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the new colleagues who have assumed their responsibilities as representatives of their Governments to the Conference on Disarmament since the end of the 2017 session.

His Excellency Michael Gaffey, Permanent Representative of Ireland, His Excellency Claudio Julio de la Ponti Ribeyro, Permanent Representative of Peru, His Excellency Alaa Youssuf, Permanent Representative of Egypt, Her Excellency Socorro Flores Liera, Permanent Representative of Mexico, His Excellency Gianfranco Incarnato, Permanent Representative of Italy: a very warm welcome especially to you and, on behalf of my own Government and on behalf of the Conference, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of our cooperation and support in your new assignments.

Now I would like to propose that the order of business for our meeting this morning should be as follows. Firstly, the adoption of the draft agenda for the 2018 session of the Conference. Secondly, the adoption of the requests of non-member States to participate in the work of the Conference at its 2018 session. Thirdly, the delivery of my statement as President of the Conference, which will be followed by the delivery of a message by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, followed by statements of delegations who wish to take the floor today.

I would now like to invite you to consider the draft agenda for the 2018 session of the Conference. This draft is contained in document CD/WP.603, which is before you. I propose that the agenda be accompanied by a presidential statement, which is the same as in previous years and which reads as follows:

> In connection with the adoption of the agenda, I, as the President of the Conference, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda. The Conference will also take into consideration rules 27 and 30 of the rules of procedure of the Conference.

Does any delegation wish to take the floor at this time? I see none. It appears that the Conference can adopt the agenda. May I take it that the Conference is ready to adopt the agenda as contained in document CD/WP.603 followed by the statement I have just read out?

It was so decided.

The President: The agenda will be issued as an official document of the Conference by the secretariat.

Let me now turn to the list of requests from States not members of the Conference who wish to participate in our work during the 2018 session. The requests received by the Conference secretariat until yesterday at 3 p.m. are contained in document CD/WP.604, available on your tables. Any requests from non-member States received after the date indicated above will be presented for consideration and decision at the next plenary meetings.

May I take it that the Conference decides to invite these States to participate in our work in accordance with its rules of procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: Allow me to suspend the meeting for a brief moment in order to allow the representatives of the non-member States who have just been invited to participate in the work of the Conference to take their seats in the Council Chamber.

The meeting was briefly suspended.

The President: The meeting is resumed. Before I invite Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to deliver a message, please allow me at this stage to make a statement in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

Madam Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Anja Kaspersen, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, distinguished members of the Conference on Disarmament, ladies and gentlemen, Sri Lanka is honoured to assume the responsibility as the President of the Conference on Disarmament. It is yet another manifestation of our steadfast contribution and consistent engagement in the field of disarmament over several decades. As a member State of the Non-Aligned Movement, Sri Lanka made its advent into the Conference in 1979 as one of eight new members admitted following the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and since then has been playing key roles in its deliberations, and subsequently in the Conference, as well. International treaties and initiatives on disarmament and non-proliferation have helped in shaping the world security architecture in order to achieve the common objectives of complete disarmament. While the international community has been active in galvanizing that architecture, it is evident that much is left to be desired in enhancing international security. The pace of multilateral disarmament, as well as non-proliferation, must be accelerated, taking into account the security interests of all States and on the basis of the principle of undiminished security for all. There is general recognition that a transparent, sustainable and credible plan for multilateral nuclear disarmament is necessary so that both disarmament and non-proliferation could advance in a mutually reinforcing manner in effectively realizing the objective of a safer world.

In working towards a common sustainable solution, Sri Lanka attaches great importance to the Conference as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, as mandated by the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. However, we are conscious that Sri Lanka assumes the presidency of this Conference at a time when this august body has critical challenges and some opportunities before it. Given the over two decade-long impasse, many appear to be disheartened over the prospects of the Conference. We are conscious that the underlying factors for this long stalemate are not necessarily limited to this room but are also connected to the complex global security environment. The situation is further complicated by the increasing threat posed by non-State actors, which warrants serious consideration within the Conference agenda. United Nations Secretary-General Mr. António Guterres, in his New Year message, alerts the world to this stark reality, observing that "conflicts have deepened and new dangers have emerged" and adding that global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the cold war.

The advances in technology will also be the key driver in the future of warfare and the rapid advances in military technology pose an additional challenge to global security. Therefore, in line with other forums such as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which in recent years has taken on issues such as lethal autonomous weapons systems, the Conference must also consider a fresh approach on these issues in order to remain relevant and responsive to the contemporary developments in the field.

The Conference also cannot function in a vacuum. As was envisaged in the first special session on disarmament, while fulfilling its mandate as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, it must be receptive and be enriched by the parallel discussions and deliberations that are taking place outside the Conference, in other disarmament forums and initiatives, as well as by giving due recognition to contributions from civil society and academia and entrepreneurs. In this context, I note that the 2018 disarmament calendar provides us with many such opportunities, including the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and the United Nations high-level conference on nuclear disarmament. Furthermore, we also welcome the proposal by the Secretary-General of the Conference to hold a third informal civil society forum this year.

Although presently facing a stalemate, we also have some reasons to be hopeful. At times when the international security environment was even more complex and challenging, the Conference was able to make progress in important areas. This underlines the capacity and the ability of the Conference mechanism to deliver results within its current format, should the member States wish to use it effectively and efficiently. The Conference also draws its strength from the fact that it is the forum where all key stakeholders are available to engage. The Conference should make use of this critical composition, which is lacking in

other disarmament initiatives outside this Conference. With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where the entire United Nations architecture has reformulated its work to better respond to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals within its respective mandates, the Conference on Disarmament, as the single negotiating body for multilateral disarmament treaties, should also contemplate how its work could contribute to the collective realization of the 2030 Agenda, given the importance of durable peace for sustainable development and vice versa.

Excellencies, the Conference on Disarmament holds a significant responsibility with regard to a rule-based international order that we as Members of the United Nations family are seeking to uphold. The Conference's continued inaction sets a negative precedent in failing to efficiently and effectively prevent or respond to new and emerging security challenges through the adoption of appropriate international instruments. Therefore, it is time to avoid the temptation of subjecting the work of this Conference to the vagaries of the ever-changing international strategic landscape; instead, we must endeavour to harness its potential to build common ground to achieve collective security. Sri Lanka hopes to remain proactively engaged within the Conference to help achieve this objective. As the first President of the 2018 session, conscious of the expectations of this Conference, we began our consultations immediately after the conclusion of the 2017 session, including meeting with Ambassador Julio Herráiz of Spain, the last President of the 2017 session, and Ambassador Htin Lynn, Chair of the working group on the way ahead.

Since then, I have held more than 30 consultations, including multiple meetings with some delegations and the permanent members of the Security Council, and with the five Presidents who will follow me in the 2018 session, as well as with other member States, in an effort to understand the opportunities and the challenges before us. One significant point that emerged from these consultations is the need for greater coordination among the six Presidents of this session, given that four weeks is not sufficient for any President to bring about a meaningful result. The other member States that will occupy the presidency this session have not only been bilaterally consulted by the first President, they also have jointly engaged in informal consultations with the Secretary-General of the Conference on three occasions over the past seven weeks in trying to build coordination among the six presidencies. This should contribute to a positive start to our work for the year as well as facilitating a continuous flow of work throughout the year.

Sri Lanka fully acknowledges the importance of establishing a programme of work for the Conference early on. We believe, however, that it should evolve through an expeditious process of consultations and consensus-making. During my consultations so far, delegations have reaffirmed their willingness to engage in this regard. However, further efforts are required to build convergence on any of the agenda items with a view to developing a programme of work. Nevertheless, we note that over the past years a number of sound proposals were presented, some even reaching near-consensus, but, due to circumstances, failed to sustain momentum. It would be worthwhile for this Conference to revisit these proposals in their original packages, or as individual agenda items, as part of a stocktaking exercise, with a view to exploring commonalities and possible modifications that may be required to adapt them to the current circumstances and realities. Such an approach may help us in finding points of convergence on a possible programme of work. We therefore hope that the document compiled by the Conference secretariat and circulated last week will facilitate an open and informed discussion. I look forward to this discussion next week, and invite delegations to consider presenting fresh ideas and innovative approaches, including through written submissions, which could bridge the existing gaps. The process suggested could be results-oriented, if the key players and other members show willingness to engage.

As we make all efforts to achieve consensus on a programme of work, it is also important to ensure that the very little time we have in the Conference is put to good use. Therefore, it is my intention to seek to have substantive discussions on the Conference agenda items, which could lead to greater understanding of each other's positions as well as to enlighten ourselves on related developments that are taking place outside this Conference.

It is the collective will of the membership that will shape the future actions of the Conference on Disarmament. Therefore, the ultimate burden rests on both your countries

and mine, as members of this Conference, to remain engaged in trying to build mutual trust and confidence as well as to find common ground in order to reach consensus.

While defending respective national positions in this forum, it is also the responsibility of all of us to communicate with and advise our respective capitals on flexibilities and new thinking that could pave the way for positive developments and deliver tangible results. We must also seek to bring back the necessary attention at the highest political levels to the Conference in order to maintain the integrity and credibility of this Conference and to create forward movement and momentum. I assure you of the commitment and dedication of my delegation to working closely with all members of the Conference in an open and transparent manner in discharging this important duty as the first President of the Conference at its 2018 session.

That concludes my remarks as the President.

It is my pleasure now to give the floor to Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu. Ms. Nakamitsu will be available for questions following the delivery of her statement.

Ms. Nakamitsu (High Representative for Disarmament Affairs): Mr. President, excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen and dear colleagues, last year I had the honour of addressing this body near the closing of your session. Today, I have the great privilege of speaking at the opening of your work in the new year. Since last September, Secretary-General Guterres has repeatedly raised alarms that global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the cold war. While we have welcomed the progress made this month in the inter-Korean talks and all other efforts that have contributed to the easing of some tensions, such engagement must still be translated into the resumption of sincere dialogue leading to sustainable peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

While we have welcomed the second anniversary of implementation day under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear programme, there have been continued reports of uncertainty regarding the commitment of the participants to its long-term preservation. We believe that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is a strong testament to the power of diplomacy and collective action in resolving non-proliferation challenges, and the Secretary-General calls for the continued full commitment of all participants.

And while the Russian Federation and the United States appear to be on track to accomplish agreed reductions of nuclear arsenals by next month, a milestone for which they must be commended, there do not appear to be any negotiations under way for further reductions beyond the expiration of the New START Treaty in 2021. Other nuclear-armed States, despite unilateral measures some have enacted, remain unconstrained by similarly binding constraints or verification. Beyond these specific issues, we are deeply troubled by signs that nuclear disarmament commitments may no longer be valued, that there is active consideration of increasing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines and that programmes continue to be pursued for upgrading, enhancing and extending existing nuclear arsenals. Consensus over the right approach for nuclear disarmament remains fractured. Looking beyond issues of nuclear disarmament, global military expenditures now exceed cold war levels. Taboos on the use of chemical weapons and on nuclear testing have been repeatedly challenged. Contemporary armed conflicts continue to devastate the lives of civilians and the infrastructure they rely on. And, as I warned this body in September, our international peace and security architecture is struggling to keep up with the implications posed by emerging military capabilities and new technologies. I believe that the time has come to ask once again what this Conference and the entire United Nations disarmament machinery is prepared and able to do to effectively address the challenges posed by this state of affairs.

The Secretary-General remains committed to the Conference on Disarmament and looks forward to an opportunity this year to address you in person. In the lead-up to this, we intend to devote significant attention to working with the presidents and members of the Conference on facilitating the resumption of negotiations this year. As we focus for one more time on how to get this Conference back to its core business, the Secretary-General has decided that it will also be important to consider how to give new momentum and

impetus to global disarmament efforts. This decision reflects a belief that the current international situation underscores the need to reframe and modernize long-standing disarmament and non-proliferation priorities, as well as to tackle new challenges. It also is a recognition that deeper divisions and persistent stagnation in this field are exacerbating international tensions and creating new dangers. We believe that many aspects of the traditional disarmament agenda could be re-energized by being clearly linked to, and positioned centrally within, contemporary priorities. For instance, the over-accumulation and proliferation of arms remain among the largest factors driving the potential for international armed conflict and point to a need to more effectively integrate disarmament into various United Nations prevention actions. In the area of humanitarian actions, the increasingly urbanized nature of armed conflict has brought new attention to the growing impact of the use of conventional weapons on civilians and civilian infrastructures.

On the important relationship between disarmament and development, in addition to reducing illicit arms flows, there is a need to strengthen links between the achievement of various disarmament objectives and many of the sustainable development goals. It is hoped that a fresh perspective on traditional disarmament objectives through the lens of contemporary concerns could thus give new momentum to global disarmament efforts at a time when the need for disarmament is once again at the forefront of international attention. Your efforts to bring this body, the Conference on Disarmament, back to its important business will have a critical impact on how we can collectively re-energize and modernize our disarmament actions. Let us work with you, support your efforts to the best of our ability as the secretariat, but we can only be effective if you bring to this historical conference room your political will to work together. The Secretary-General will look for an opportunity to deliver a major address in the first half of this year, outlining his agenda for disarmament. On his behalf, I am committed to pursuing a multi-stakeholder approach in working to develop this agenda. We look forward to engaging with you in various settings in the months ahead on this initiative.

Distinguished delegates, in his remarks to the Security Council open debate on addressing complex contemporary challenges to international peace and security, the Secretary-General made three points which are particularly salient to our present conundrums. First, we are seeing not only a quantitative but also a qualitative change in threats to international peace and security. The perils of nuclear weapons are again front and centre, cybersecurity dangers are escalating, the number of armed conflicts has declined over the long-term, but, in the Middle East and parts of Africa, conflicts have surged. Second, the changing nature of conflict means rethinking our approaches, both how we work and how we work with others. Third, prevention must be at the centre of everything we do. It is my hope that these perspectives can be part of the solution that unlocks the path towards a safer and more secure world.

The President: I thank the High Representative for her statement and now, ladies and gentlemen, Ms. Nakamitsu will be available for questions following her statement. I thank her for her commitment and work. Please use this opportunity to get a greater sense of some of the comments that she made, which she has very kindly volunteered to address.

I see no flags at the moment, I think Ms. Nakamitsu is going to be with us much of today, so we will be having several opportunities to follow up on the matters which have come up in the course of those discussions.

At this time, I wish to turn to the list of speakers for today. The following delegations have requested to take the floor: Peru, Bulgaria, Germany, Norway, Brazil, Sweden, Mexico, Turkey, Romania, Canada, Australia, Spain, Belgium, Japan, Italy, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, the United Kingdom, Belarus, the Netherlands and Indonesia are so far on my list. I invite the Ambassador of Peru to take the floor.

Mr. De la Puente (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation for the warm welcome that you extended to the new representatives a couple of minutes ago, by extending a very warm welcome of my own to the distinguished delegates and by congratulating you on assuming the stewardship of our work in the Conference on Disarmament. We trust in your proven abilities for the

performance of this delicate task and you may count on my delegation's full support in helping to make your work a success. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable message conveyed by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Mr. President, it is an honour for me to address the Conference for the first time in the historic Francisco de Vitoria room, surrounded by monumental frescoes that depict the world and the lofty ideals of humanity, such as justice, hope, peace, freedom and the law. The beginning of a new session provides us with an opportunity to renew our efforts in favour of global peace and security and to demonstrate our political will to energize the work of this forum.

We must send a clear message to the international community that we are serious about our commitment to the lofty ideals that I just mentioned, which should inspire our work.

We recognize the contribution of the Conference as a forum for negotiation that made it possible, many years ago now, to achieve substantial progress on disarmament. Despite the frustrating paralysis that has, for so long, affected a forum of the utmost importance for international security, we must not lose our resolve to sustain and encourage a frank dialogue that enables us to bridge our differences in the search for tangible results and agreements. We therefore remain hopeful that 2018 will be a milestone year, with the Conference returning to substantive work through the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that will make it possible to begin negotiations on priority issues, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament, the prohibition of the production of fissile material and negative security assurances. In this regard, we greatly appreciate the compilation that you shared with the delegations, which we trust will be extremely useful in facilitating our discussions and stimulating reflections on the best way to take up proposals and determine the direction of our work.

Peru has a long tradition of commitment to all multilateral efforts to promote peace, disarmament and international security. We support all initiatives leading to general and complete disarmament, giving priority to the prohibition and total elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We cannot remain indifferent in the face of the unacceptable reality of a world in which there is a nuclear capability that represents an ongoing threat to the whole of humankind. The dire consequences of using nuclear weapons stretch far beyond national borders and can severely affect the environment, development, the economy, food security, health and the very survival of current and future generations. That is why we strongly support the commencement of negotiations within our Conference, which is the natural forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament matters.

However, there is no escaping the fact that the lack of consensus on a programme of work has caused multilateral disarmament negotiations to be conducted outside this forum. In this context, Peru decided to be a sponsor of the resolution that gave rise to negotiations within the General Assembly on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. We did so in the knowledge that the status quo was unsustainable and in the belief that there was a moral imperative to heed the cry of the international community for a world free of weapons of mass destruction. And, in keeping with this responsibility, Peru was one of the first States to sign the treaty.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leading role played in this achievement by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and we applaud the outstanding recognition granted to the organization with the award of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize.

We are aware of the defence and security needs and the strategic military interests that prevent further progress in the negotiating efforts that we are making in this room. Nevertheless, we believe that we need to persist in our endeavour, assume the responsibilities demanded of us by the international community and arrive at a turning point that will put an end to the damaging inertia of this Conference. This requires flexibility from all the countries represented here to enable us to face the complex challenges to global security together, through the adoption of a programme of work and the urgent commencement of negotiations.

We consider that special responsibility is borne by nuclear-weapon States and States that continue to develop new nuclear programmes in clear defiance of international law, peace and security, as is the case with the nuclear and ballistic missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

My country pays close attention to, and takes great interest in, any possibility of dialogue that can bridge differences, reduce tensions and lead to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and we also call for global security to prevail over individual considerations, so that humanity can aspire to a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Peru has just begun its term on the Security Council as a non-permanent member for the biennium 2018–2019. From the outset of our membership of this august body, we have taken on the task entrusted to us with the utmost seriousness. In this context, we are promoting the implementation of the new approach based on sustainable peace as a means of providing a more coherent response to the new and changing global challenges in the area of peace and security. This means, among other activities, addressing the underlying causes of conflicts before, during and after their occurrence, with policies geared towards development and greater involvement by women and young people. It also entails placing particular emphasis on preventive diplomacy in an effort to end the mistrust that tends to create perceptions of insecurity that result in an arms build-up. To this end, we will support the development of open channels of communication and mutual understanding, open and transparent procedures, monitoring and verification mechanisms and crisis management protocols. Together with other confidence-building measures, these will form the basis for a minimum level of cooperation that will reduce the risk of escalations or accidents with severe consequences.

Lastly, Mr. President, let me reiterate that the delegation of Peru is fully prepared to work actively with all the countries represented here to find a consensus that allows progress to be made towards tangible achievements on the difficult path leading to general and complete disarmament.

The President: I thank the Permanent Representative of Peru for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria.

Ms. Kostadinova (Bulgaria): Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries — the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania, the country of the stabilization and association process and potential candidate, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia — align themselves with this statement.

Let me start by congratulating Sri Lanka on assuming the first presidency of this year's Conference on Disarmament session. You can count on the European Union's support to achieve a successful start to the session. We thank the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for their messages and their continued support and engagement to bring the Conference back on track. The European Union reaffirms its commitment to treaty-based nuclear arms control and disarmament and underlines the need to renew multilateral efforts and revitalize multilateral negotiating bodies, in particular the Conference on Disarmament. We all are concerned and affected by the current ever-changing and challenging security environment, marked by international tensions, military build-up, regional conflicts and the global threat from terrorism. All of the above are putting strains on the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. We must endeavour to stop this worrying trend, restore dialogue and trust, and move from confrontation to cooperation to be able to solve global challenges. Effective multilateralism and the rules-based international system, with the United Nations at its core, are indispensable for ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security.

The illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea represent a growing and serious threat to international peace and security and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. The European Union has repeatedly condemned the nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in outright violation of multiple Security Council resolutions.

We welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2397 (2017) and call on all States to fully and effectively implement the restrictive measures with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This latest Security Council resolution is being transposed into European Union legislation, and the European Union's rigorous autonomous sanctions were further strengthened by European Union foreign ministers yesterday.

We once again urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to completely abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in order to achieve a lasting peace and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful means. The recent high-level talks held between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are an encouraging signal, but urgent efforts are required by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to address the international concerns regarding its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and to comply with its international obligations, including returning to compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency comprehensive safeguards agreement.

We also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. There is a need to foster trust, de-escalate tensions and prepare the ground for a credible and meaningful dialogue, aimed at pursuing the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Unified international pressure, combined with dialogue and incentives, can help to solve even the most pressing proliferation crises, as we saw in the case of Iran. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is a result of nearly 13 years of diplomatic effort facilitated by the European Union and it was unanimously endorsed by Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). The unity of the international community is essential to preserve a deal that is working and ensuring that the Iranian nuclear programme can only serve peaceful and civilian ends under robust International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action strengthens the global non-proliferation regime on the basis of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, thus being an important asset for regional and international security. We expect all parties to continue to fully implement this agreement.

Mr. President, we are united in our support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with article VI of the Treaty and an important element in the future development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. These three pillars are equally important and mutually reinforcing. As we approach the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, an important cycle in all aspects, which coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty, our priority is to uphold, preserve and further strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a key multilateral instrument for reinforcing international peace, security and stability, promote its universalization and strengthen its implementation.

In this vein, the European Union will play a constructive and active role in following up on the obligations and commitments assumed under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or undertaken during the previous Review Conferences on all three pillars. By chairing the first two Preparatory Committee meetings, European Union member States made it evident that both the spirit and the letter of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remain highly important for the European Union's non-proliferation policy. The European Union recalls that all States parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty are committed to pursuing policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. We stress the need for concrete progress towards the full implementation of article VI of the Treaty, especially through an overall reduction in the global stockpile of nuclear weapons, taking into account the special responsibility of the States that possess the largest nuclear arsenals. We emphasize the importance of preserving the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and call upon the signatories of this Treaty to actively engage in a dialogue on ways of ensuring full and verifiable compliance. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty is a landmark arms control agreement that resulted in the elimination of an entire class of weapons, including some 3,000 nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles from the European continent. It is vital for our security and a

tangible contribution by the signatories to the fulfilment of their obligations under article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We note that, by 5 February 2018, the United States and the Russian Federation are set to meet the central limits on strategic arms of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. We encourage the parties to extend the Treaty and seek further reductions to their arsenals, including strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed nuclear weapons. In particular, we encourage the United States and the Russian Federation to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in arms control and nuclear disarmament processes, pursue further discussions on confidence-building, transparency, verification activities and reporting and reduce the operational readiness of their nuclear weapon systems to the minimum level necessary.

We call on all States concerned to take appropriate practical measures in order to reduce the risk of accidental nuclear war. Promoting universalization and the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a top priority for the European Union. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of crucial importance for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It has become a solid and effective instrument, with a robust verification system. We call on all States, in particular those annex 2 countries that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without any preconditions or delay. We welcome the reaffirmation of the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty through Security Council resolution 2310 (2016).

Mr. President, the European Union and its member States remain deeply concerned by the ongoing stalemate in the Conference and its persistent failure to agree on a programme of work. The Conference is the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum and should fulfil its crucial role to negotiate multilateral disarmament treaties in accordance with its mandate. We appeal to the incoming presidencies and all Conference members to exert their utmost efforts to break the impasse and follow the successful example of the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which was able to find consensus last year after many years of deadlock. The European Union encourages the Conference to build on substantive discussions that were held last year in the working group on the way ahead. Although we regret that, owing to diverging views, no consensual recommendations were reached, the technical nature of these exchanges proved useful to gain a better understanding of various positions and concerns with the aim of building common ground for substantive work on all core items. Let us not lose time in a protracted procedural debate, but allow work to continue to identify areas of convergence so that we would be better prepared to start negotiations when the overall context so allows. We could take stock and identify the role and priority of the Conference's core subjects in the international security and disarmament context and consider the scope, objectives and legal arrangements of possible treaties or other agreements. The programme of work could include such a process.

As laid out in action 6 of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference action plan, we agree that the Conference should establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament, within the context of an agreed, comprehensive and balanced programme of work. Our long-standing priority is to immediately commence negotiations in the Conference of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, on the basis of document CD/1299 and the mandate contained therein. In this context, we support the work of the High-level Expert Preparatory Group, led by Canada, whose mandate is to make recommendations on substantial elements for a future fissile material cut-off treaty, without prejudice to national positions in future negotiations. In the meantime, we call on all States possessing nuclear weapons that have not yet done so to declare and uphold an immediate moratorium on their production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that, on 11 December 2017, European Union foreign ministers decided to provide support to African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries to facilitate their participation in the fissile material cut-off treaty consultative process established by the 2016 General Assembly resolution. The technical implementation of this European Union project, worth more than €1.2 million, has been entrusted to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs through its Geneva branch,

its regional disarmament branch and the three regional centres for peace and disarmament, which will reach out to as many stakeholders as possible over the next three years.

Nuclear disarmament verification will be another key area of work in 2018. We welcome the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification. We also look forward to further work in other forums, such as the international partnership for nuclear disarmament verification.

With regard to negative security assurances, the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference recommended that the Conference on Disarmament begin discussions with a view to elaborating recommendations on all aspects of the issue, without excluding an internationally legally binding instrument. The European Union recognizes the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in receiving unequivocal security assurances from nuclear-weapon States as part of binding and agreed security arrangements. The European Union calls on all nuclear-weapon States to reaffirm existing security assurances noted by Security Council resolution 984 (1995) and recalled in Security Council resolutions 1887 (2009) and 2310 (2016).

The European Union stands ready to contribute actively to the objectives of the peaceful uses of outer space and of the prevention of an arms race in outer space, as demonstrated by the earlier European Union proposal for an international code of conduct. We note that a new group of governmental experts will be convened to discuss substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. While we do not exclude the possibility of a legally binding norm in the future, we firmly believe that best near-term prospects for the security, safety and sustainability of outer space activity lie in responsible space-sharing and other nations endeavouring to agree on voluntary principles of responsible behaviour in outer space.

Furthermore, I would like to reiterate European Union member States' long-standing commitment to the enlargement of the Conference. We underline the importance of furthering substantive consultations on the expansion of its membership and strongly support the appointment of a special coordinator in this respect. We also encourage enhanced interaction between civil society and the Conference and hope that further steps can be taken towards broadened contributions of non-governmental organizations, academia and research institutions. We look forward to receiving further information on the next Civil Society Forum announced for 2018.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to emphasize that promotion of gender equality, gender consciousness, empowerment of women and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence is an important horizontal priority for the European Union. We believe that the active and equal participation and leadership of women in decision-making and action, including in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, is crucial to achieving peace, security and sustainable development. The European Union will continue to promote the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all other relevant resolutions aimed at advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

The President: I thank the representative of Bulgaria representing the European Union for her statement and I now call upon the representative of Germany, Her Excellency Ms. Susanne Baumann, Special Ambassador for Disarmament in the Foreign Office.

Ms. Baumann (Germany): First of all, Mr. President, let me congratulate you on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during its 2018 session. Please be assured of my country's ongoing and full support to you and your team.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by Bulgaria on behalf of the European Union. We are commencing this first session of 2018 under difficult circumstances. As was set out by the High Representative, there is an urgent need for the multilateral arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation architecture not only to overcome the current deadlock in many areas but to defend it and to make it fit to cope with new challenges in the twenty-first century. This is particularly pertinent, since the global security environment continues to be fragile and challenging.

In 2017, North Korea tested and expanded its nuclear capabilities, including their means of delivery, in an unprecedented manner and in flagrant violation of international

law, thereby acting against a united international community. We urge North Korea to take decisive and irreversible steps to denuclearize, to stop its ballistic missile programme and to respond positively to the various offers of dialogue to reach a diplomatic solution to the conflict.

The international arms control and disarmament architecture continues to be under severe pressure. One example is the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Since 2014, the United States has publicly declared its determination that Russia is in violation of its obligations under the Treaty. Germany welcomes the talks between the United States and Russia to resolve the outstanding questions. Germany calls upon Russia to address concerns in a transparent and substantial manner and to start a technical dialogue with the United States. It is in the joint interests especially of European States that this landmark arms control agreement is complied with and preserved.

Despite growing challenges, the Iran nuclear deal continues to be fully implemented by all sides and the International Atomic Energy Agency has repeatedly confirmed Iran's compliance through its long-term verification and monitoring programme. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is a major achievement of nuclear non-proliferation and an important asset to regional and global security.

Germany is strongly determined to ensure the continued, full and effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action as the best means to ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear programme. At the same time, we are deeply concerned about Iran's ballistic missile programme and Tehran's problematic regional activities. Together with our partners, we will address these issues while working closely with all relevant sides, albeit outside the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in other formats and forums.

In 2017, we also saw the start of a new review cycle of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty — the bedrock of the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture — where a committed and very able Dutch Chair managed to inject a new constructive spirit into the process. We are confident that the second session of the Preparatory Committee in 2018 will build on this success and we reassure the incoming Chair of our utmost support in preserving and reinforcing this important instrument, which has been so instrumental in maintaining peace and stability in the world for almost five decades. In order to do so, we need to strengthen our engagement on all three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The countries of the non-proliferation and disarmament initiative, including Germany, are deeply committed to the goal of preserving and strengthening the Treaty, and reaffirmed their commitment in their ministerial meeting in New York in September 2017.

Also in 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was agreed and opened for signature. As is well known, Germany has not signed this Treaty and does not intend to do so, as, in our view, it will not provide any added value to the current security architecture. Yet we have to understand why it has come into existence and why so many countries have engaged in this process. A considerable portion of the international community is simply disappointed about the scant progress that has been made in the domain of nuclear disarmament over the past years. We, too, regret this lack of progress. However, instead of really trying out short cuts, we believe that we need to increase our efforts to take more tangible steps: concrete nuclear disarmament steps that will be agreed with the nuclear-weapon States and effectively, verifiably and irreversibly implemented.

That is why Germany is set to continue pushing for tangible progress on the basis of a concrete step-by-step approach, which must take into account the prevailing security environment. This must include the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Equally important is progress towards commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty that would significantly increase this current security context by reducing proliferation risks and de facto freezing the number of nuclear warheads worldwide.

Another key to progress in nuclear disarmament is to elaborate mechanisms for the verification of nuclear disarmament. With the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group and the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear

Disarmament Verification, two important processes are now under way in this regard outside the Conference. We would prefer to bring them back to the Conference today rather than tomorrow and start real negotiations. However, the current deadlock in the Conference should not prevent us from continuing our substantive work towards our common shared objective of a world free of nuclear weapons. In order to rebuild trust in the current tense international environment and strengthen the global non-proliferation regime as well as the quest for disarmament, we think that a fresh look is needed at the important role that the existing negative security assurances by nuclear-weapon States have played in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty context.

As a co-facilitator of the respective informal discussions in the Conference last year, we were encouraged by the broad support for this issue, which could prove crucial in the process of breaking the deadlock within the Conference.

Let me now turn to our agenda in the Conference for 2018. After 22 years of stalemate, the patience of many parties is understandably eroding, including ours. Yet we cannot simply resign in the face of this challenge. What is more, we hardly have an alternative other than to explore new ways to make better use of this body's potential and resources. The channels for communication the Conference is offering are more and more important in a global context, with conflicting security interests. So let us make the most of the existing platform, building on the positive experiences of the past when we conducted substantive discussions on the core agenda items of this forum. As a programme of work, commencing substantive negotiations might once again not be a realistic prospect for 2018, but this could be facilitated through a more specific mandate for the Conference to include these kinds of in-depth discussion of the core agenda items without having to resort to long procedural detours to make this happen. However, in addition, we need to make progress on at least some of the core agenda items and develop new approaches. This could include discussions on new global security challenges and those connected with the threats posed by emerging technologies like artificial intelligence or the autonomy of technologies.

Madam High Representative, Mr. President, Germany has on many occasions proven its readiness to move ahead with action. Germany will continue to work hard to achieve our common goal of a safer and a more stable world through disarmament and arms control. This is true for nuclear issues, but we will also continue our active work in non-nuclear initiatives, like the explosive weapons in populated areas initiative, lethal autonomous weapons and, of course, small arms and light weapons. In this sense, I wish us all a very busy and results-oriented Conference session for the year 2018.

The President: I thank the Special Ambassador for Disarmament in the Foreign Office of Germany for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Norway.

Mr. Brattskar (Norway): Mr. President, first let me congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We wish you and the next five Presidents every success in the upcoming deliberations on the programme of work for the Conference. I would also like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her thought-provoking remarks.

Given today's challenging global security landscape, any progress in the field of arms control would be welcome. A resumption of substantive work in the Conference would, for example, be an important step forward. We are deeply concerned about current proliferation threats, in particular the threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We are worried that nuclear weapons may be given a more prominent place in security doctrines and that we may face a new nuclear arms race. Today it is clear that some key arms control agreements are under pressure. Important achievements since the end of the cold war in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are at stake. We still face considerable challenges in the field of nuclear security.

In these uncertain times, we must make full use of the various arenas to re-engage, promote dialogue and foster confidence. Norway welcomes the fact that the United States and Russia are pursuing a path of strategic bilateral dialogue. We encourage continued talks between nuclear-weapon States. Norway considers the nuclear agreement with Iran to be a

good example of the way in which diplomacy can produce results. We must uphold this agreement.

We must also make full use of the existing intergovernmental machinery. The Conference on Disarmament has been paralysed for more than 20 years. We cannot allow this to continue, especially at a time when the nuclear risk is growing. The Conference is not an end in itself but provides a forum for States, both those that have nuclear weapons and those that do not, to discuss and negotiate instruments that would make the world safer.

Mr. President, we cannot achieve the objective of a world without nuclear weapons unless all stakeholders are at the table. There is no fast track towards the elimination of nuclear weapons; irrespective of positions on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we have to start working together if we are to realize the vision of "global zero". For instance, we need to work more at identifying and developing practical and effective measures on nuclear disarmament verification. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty remains the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, so it is vital to bring the current review cycle to a successful conclusion in 2020. In doing so, we must recognize the Treaty's role in enhancing our security and focus on what unites us. Although it has not entered into force, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains a key deliverable, the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It has established a norm against nuclear testing and for addressing the issue of the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It should also consider ways to further consolidate this norm.

Continued efforts in the field of nuclear security are vital for addressing nuclear risks and preventing any nuclear detonations, intentional or not. The Norwegian Government remains strongly committed to enhancing nuclear security. This is part of a comprehensive approach to security, non-proliferation and disarmament. In June this year, we will host the Third International Symposium on the Minimization of Highly Enriched Uranium in the Civilian Nuclear Sector. This has been a nuclear security priority for Norway for several years and other governments. Starting negotiations on a fissile material treaty remains the logical next step on our agenda. We must all bear in mind that starting negotiations is not the same as concluding an agreement. We know that views on such a treaty, including its scope, definitions and support functions, differ, but you cannot address these issues unless we actually start working to develop a treaty. Ultimately, a fissile material cut-off treaty could limit a future arms race. It could foster enhanced confidence between parties. It could lead to actual disarmament, by gradually replacing stocks under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards. Trust and confidence can be built through nuclear disarmament verification and this in turn can facilitate progress on our disarmament agenda.

Last week, the Norwegian Government presented its new political platform. In it, nuclear disarmament verification is identified as a priority area of security policy for the Government.

Mr. President, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/67, the Group of Governmental Experts on Nuclear Disarmament Verification is being established. Its first session will take place here in Geneva in mid-May. Norway expects the Group to build a body of experience in the field of verification and draw inspiration from cooperative frameworks such as the United Kingdom-Norway initiative, the Quad Nuclear Verification Partnership and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification. Norway greatly appreciates the excellent cooperation it has had with the United Nations Secretariat in connection with the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts.

For the past few years, United Nations Member States have increasingly made use of the group of governmental experts mechanism to advance their arms control priorities. This can be seen as an expression of the strong commitment to promoting certain disarmament issues. This will obviously be welcomed. But the increasing use of the Group of Governmental Experts could also be seen as a sign that the established intergovernmental machinery is not fulfilling its mandate. If the latter is the case, then you are dealing with a far more serious question. The Conference on Disarmament cannot alone solve the shortcomings of a current intergovernmental machinery, but it can still make positive

contributions. At the end of the day, it is up to the Conference member States to demonstrate the flexibility needed to allow us to get back to work. In previous years, we have come very close to adopting a programme of work on a number of occasions. I hope we can make this year the one that we finally are able to do so.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Norway for his remarks and I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): Mr. President, Brazil congratulates you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for 2018 and assures you of Brazilian cooperation in making good progress in our work. I also wish to acknowledge the presence of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, and to thank her, and through her the United Nations Secretary-General, for their pledges of commitment and engagement with the re-energized multilateral disarmament programme.

Mr. President, the Conference needs to respond to developments that strongly affect the post-Second World War order under which it was conceived. The single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations cannot spend another year toying with paralysis. The Conference needs structure and an agenda and a work programme. It needs to react to developments in the real world. Our two decades of blockage in the Conference have not stopped the world from marching closer to the risk of use or detonation of nuclear weapons.

As we sat in this chamber for the 2017 session, a full-blown treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons was negotiated from scratch, approved by 122 countries and opened for signature. All other disarmament treaties, relevant though they may be from a humanitarian standpoint, are not as impactful or as ambitious as the new treaty. We have yet another ongoing cycle of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty reviews scheduled to culminate in 2020. Prospects so far are not particularly promising. A move was made and a resolution adopted in the General Assembly to inject some dynamism into discussions on a fissile materials treaty. But this movement also lies outside the purview of the Conference. Last year, we heard a lot of rough talk and brinkmanship on the subject of the Korean Peninsula. Now, as 2018 starts, the issues seem to have momentarily subsided and a new dynamic of Olympian diplomacy has started without great clarity as to where this ever-changing and unpredictable development will lead us.

The Conference on Disarmament and the Geneva disarmament community need and deserve a fresh start. Discussions on the way ahead were rich and meaningful in 2017 but left no formal outcome that we could build on now. We see the need for a more substantive and motivated collective effort in the Conference in 2018 to capture and interpret the structural changes in armament, in conflict, in peace and security and their overall impact on development and global welfare against the backdrop of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Brazil is willing and open to having a real discussion on all issues of relevance to the disarmament agenda. We support the collective reshaping of a worthwhile agenda and programme for the Conference, our work methods, the level of technical support available to the Conference and parallel contributions from within and without the Conference, and we appreciate the welcome and timely leadership from the top ranks of the United Nations. These may sound like recurring vows made out of frustration with the long-standing lack of structured dialogue and agreements, but, if others are of the same mood and disposition, we are prepared to back them with deeds and constructive engagement.

The President: I thank the Permanent Representative of Brazil and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Sweden.

Ms. Bard (Sweden): Mr. President, let me at the outset warmly welcome our new colleagues from Ireland, Peru, Egypt, Mexico and Italy to this august body, the Conference on Disarmament.

Sweden subscribes fully to the statement of the European Union. Many of the general disarmament issues have been touched upon in that statement and I would like therefore to add a few more Conference-specific points in a national capacity.

Allow me to begin by congratulating Sri Lanka on the assumption of the first presidency of the Conference. Let me assure you that Sweden, the next country in line of this year's six rotating presidencies, will wholeheartedly support you in your work. I would like to thank also the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for the message of support and encouragement. Ms. Nakamitsu's interesting insights and suggestions, thought-provoking as always, are a reminder of the necessity to break the deadlock that has been something of an unfortunate trademark of the Conference for over two decades and to achieve real progress in our common endeavours.

Mr. President, it is high time for the Conference on Disarmament — the single multilateral disarmament negotiations forum to fulfil the role it was created for — to bring about real progress on disarmament. For many years now, the Conference has heard that delegations are willing to make progress. It has been for the most part only on their selected issues and only on their own predetermined conditions. This has led to a vicious circle of mutual distrust and at times absurd procedural debates. Let us set aside old mantras and direct the focus of our work on what can be achieved. Let us be realistic but also ambitious. The prevailing global security environment demands nothing less. Negotiations of disarmament treaties should of course always be our ultimate objective: that is, after all, the core task of this body. Short of that, we should approach our work with an open mind and strive for workable solutions to advance the work of the Conference. Let us not allow unrealistic expectations be the enemy of the common good. With political will, a spirit of compromise and joint efforts, we could be on our way to achieving results that will unite us, not divide us. Disarmament does not just happen, we have to make it happen. We believe that the members of the Conference can break the deadlock that has paralysed it for far too long. We can build on the constructive discussions held in last year's meeting of the working group on the way ahead and transform some of them, or other proposals and creative ideas, into real constructive work that will advance multilateral disarmament in a united and effective manner.

The President: I thank the Ambassador for Sweden for her statement. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Mexico.

Ms. Flores Liera (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I appreciate the warm words of welcome that you addressed to my delegation. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu and the efforts that are being made to revitalize and modernize the disarmament agenda.

Ms. Anja Kaspersen, Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, distinguished colleagues, it is a real honour for me to participate for the first time in a meeting of the Conference. It is also a tremendous responsibility at this critical juncture for international disarmament.

Mr. President, I wish you every success in the exercise of your mandate and can assure you now of my delegation's support and willingness to work with the members of this Conference in pursuit of a more secure and peaceful world for everyone.

It is no secret that we are currently facing the most complex and demanding security situation since the end of the cold war. For the first time in decades, the media are mentioning the possible use of nuclear weapons, and the rhetoric from some countries reveals their willingness to resort to such weapons, escalating tensions and provoking an arms race. This is not how we envisaged the world being almost 50 years on from the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The prevailing uncertainty is unacceptable. Just a few days ago, we experienced a false alarm about an imminent nuclear strike that fortunately did not have more serious consequences, but it did reignite the debate over the possible use of nuclear weapons by accident or because of a misperception. So long as nuclear weapons exist, the underlying risk of their being detonated will remain, with devastating effects on humanity. Nuclear-weapon States must behave responsibly and honour the commitments that they made to the international community, which form the cornerstone of the international regime. We want to see real leadership and less rhetoric.

Mexico reiterates its deep concern over the current situation. Thanks to the work carried out in recent years, particularly at the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, we now have a better understanding of the humanitarian consequences that can flow from the detonation of nuclear weapons and this knowledge should be enough for us to renew our efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament. The existing disarmament machinery must rise to the occasion and, through the discharge of the mandate of each of the relevant forums, make progress in this area.

We are aware that multiple factors are contributing to the chronic impasse affecting the Conference. Sadly, there is no shortage of countries denying that there is a problem and, in so doing, preventing the possibility of finding a solution. In this respect, in a strictly procedural sense, my delegation hopes that, at the 2018 session, adequate attention will be paid to the following points. First, it is imperative that the Conference fulfils its negotiating mandate, issued at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Mexico hopes that, in compliance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure, the first presidency of the 2018 session will focus its efforts on adopting a programme of work. Secondly, Mexico believes that the membership of the Conference does not reflect the current international situation and we hope that, in line with rule 2 of the rules of procedure, the necessary measures are taken and decisions made at this session to review the composition of the membership. Thirdly, my country believes that the working methods of this Conference need to be updated. In particular, we think that this forum would benefit from a mechanism that would allow the direct and active participation of civil society. We also have to work out how to prevent abuse of the consensus rule, which is intended to facilitate agreements on legal instruments but has been used constantly to prevent the commencement of negotiations.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, the time has come to make decisions, break down the inertia and use the structure of this Conference to pursue a disarmament agenda, for which there is at present a very urgent need.

My country has been very clear on this point and has spoken out strongly against the current ineffectiveness of this forum and the unacceptability of continuing to allocate human, financial, professional and political resources to an institution that does not fulfil its mandate but, on the contrary, indulges in an exercise in empty diplomacy. Mexico supports and participates actively in initiatives that seek to further the disarmament agenda.

I would like to highlight three instruments that form part of the legal disarmament framework and to which my country is deeply committed: the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. There are challenges to the effective implementation of each of these. With regard to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Mexico will continue to contribute to the preparatory process for the 2020 Review Conference. The Treaty must fulfil the basic premise behind its creation. While we and other non-nuclear-weapon States have committed ourselves to nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear-weapon States are failing to deliver on their obligation under article VI to pursue negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament.

We wish to reiterate how important it is for States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Treaty and abide by its provisions. This will be the best way to move forward together towards a safer world.

As for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Mexico will continue to press for the long-overdue entry into force of this instrument in the relevant forums. In the meantime, we reiterate that there is a norm of general international law concerning the prohibition of nuclear tests that all States are bound to respect, whether they are parties to the Treaty or not. Regarding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Mexico is committed to the entry into force of this instrument, which was adopted recently in New York by a large number of States that have taken the step of adopting a binding standard. I wish to be clear on this point and repeat what my delegation has said on numerous occasions: the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is not a substitute for, and does not compete with, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. These instruments are

complementary. Mexico views the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Let us be frank: 72 years on from the first nuclear explosion, the time has come to wipe nuclear weapons off the face of the earth. In addition to participating actively in the annual meetings of the conventional weapons conventions to which my country is a party, Mexico will participate constructively in the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. As part of this process, we will have the honour of hosting the regional consultations for Latin America and the Caribbean on the Treaty on 15 February in Mexico City, in the run-up to the 2018 session of the Preparatory Committee. Moreover, Mexican experts will take part in the High-level Expert Preparatory Group established in General Assembly resolution 71/259 on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices and the Group of Governmental Experts established in General Assembly resolution 71/67 on nuclear disarmament verification.

My delegation expresses its full commitment and willingness to support the efforts that the Presidents of the 2018 session and the members undertake to promote disarmament and the proper functioning of this Conference in accordance with the mandate given to it. On the other hand, we will not support the adoption of decisions that seek once again to enable simulation exercises that do not contribute to the achievement of disarmament but are intended to give the semblance of substantive work where none exists.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Mexico for her statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Turkey.

Mr. Koru (Turkey): Mr. President, I would like to join other colleagues and congratulate you on your assumption of the first presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I assure you of Turkey's full support and cooperation in your endeavours to advance the work of the Conference. I also welcome Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to Geneva.

Mr. President, the Conference has a unique place and a very special responsibility in international forums. It is tasked with negotiating multilateral disarmament instruments with the aim of achieving the ultimate goal of creating a safer world. Bearing this important responsibility on our shoulders, it is regrettable that the Conference has not been able to come up with new openings for more than two decades. Is it because the world is a safer place than it was before the new millennium? Obviously, this is not the case. On the contrary, there exists an increasing urgency to address the new challenges that we face today.

The first step to overcome the situation is to learn from the repeated failures and achieve consensus on a programme of work. We begin each year with cherishing hopes. Therefore, I wish to express my hopes for a breakthrough and call upon all members to help create an atmosphere of compromise and flexibility to maintain the relevance of the Conference by enabling the resumption of its substantive work. Many thought-provoking proposals were discussed last year. The establishment of the working group on the way ahead was a timely initiative. We would have preferred, at the least, to have some recommendations to be carried into this year's session as an end result of more than 20 meetings of the working group, but, unfortunately, this was not realized.

Mr. President, we are of the opinion that this situation has not been created by the procedures, membership issues or international dynamics of the Conference. Turkey is convinced that the Conference possesses the mandate, rules of procedure and membership to perform its duties. What it lacks, we believe, is the strong political will to resume its fundamental task, namely to negotiate legally binding international treaties.

Turkey considers that the achievement of the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons depends first and foremost on the successful and universal implementation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty regime. Our approach to nuclear disarmament is focused on incremental steps that will progressively deliver concrete results towards our goal. It is crucial that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the current Treaty review cycle are not undermined by efforts undertaken elsewhere. We highly value the upcoming

session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, to be held in Geneva this year, where we will engage actively and constructively.

Last year, the Conference on Disarmament spent many hours on provocative ballistic missile and nuclear tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We strongly condemn all those tests, which constitute flagrant violations of Security Council resolutions. We call upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolutions and refrain from actions that would further escalate the tensions and undermine the prospects of nuclear disarmament.

Turkey also appreciated the virtue of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which stands before us as an example for the effectiveness and success of multilateral diplomacy in advancing the objectives of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We encourage all the parties concerned to live up to their commitments and refrain from any action that would undermine the integrity of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Mr. President, an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and commencement of the fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations are crucial for global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. We urge the remaining annex 2 States of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to sign and ratify the Treaty without further delay.

Although the Conference has been in a dormant phase in terms of negotiating legally binding international instrument for many years, we should always remind ourselves of its past achievements and the future benefits of prospective agreements. The pressing reality of a deteriorating international security environment forces us to work harder on finding ways to overcome the deadlock at the Conference. Mutual understanding, goodwill and compromise are going to lead us through this deadlock. Turkey believes diplomacy is the only lasting solution to our contemporary problems. In this vein, we have to let the Conference perform to its true potential.

Mr. President, Turkey will be assuming the sixth and last presidency of the Conference in 2018 and we will spare no efforts, together with other Presidents, to advance the work of the Conference throughout the year. To conclude, let me reiterate our support to Sri Lanka and future Presidents of the session before us and wish you success.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Turkey. I wish to thank him and the Ambassador of Sweden for their support for the presidency, and all the other Presidents for 2018. Next, I call upon the Ambassador of Romania to take the floor.

Mr. Vierita (Romania): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your assumption of the responsibility as the first President of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation for your work to the benefit of the Conference. I also wish every success to all the Conference presidencies for the year 2018 in their joint effort to advance the work of the Conference. I would also like to welcome and thank Ms. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for reminding us all that the mission of the Conference is to be a driving force for building a safer world and a better future.

As this year's annual session has only just begun, we are at the anticipatory stage, waiting for the arrival of a critical turning point. I hope this moment will come soon and that it will really mark the reinvigoration of multilateral disarmament. This unique multilateral disarmament negotiating body holds much potential and we must demonstrate a strong political will and understanding to move forward. Only in this way will we reconfirm the Conference's potential to deal with global disarmament challenges through multilateral negotiations.

Romania aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union. At the same time, I would also like to add some brief remarks in my national capacity. Romania shares the belief that in today's world peace and security must be addressed from a global perspective, considering disarmament and arms control as the keystones of the global security architecture. We are facing security challenges at all levels, whether global, regional or local. This is a common challenge which requires cooperation and coordination. Regardless of the long-standing stalemate in the Conference, Romania continues to attach

great value to the work of this body and strongly supports the Conference as a major framework for nuclear issues, acknowledging its importance for international peace and strengthening world security.

I would like to recall that my delegation worked over the years with the sincere desire to contribute to reactivating the substantive work of this Conference. It was in this spirit that Romania proposed the establishment of the working group on the way ahead, with a view to finding the common ground needed to move on. Although we are far from progress, we believe we can build on the last year's substantive discussions in identifying areas of convergence for future work.

Mr. President, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation stand high on the Conference agenda and represent priorities of our foreign policy. If the Conference is to truly take its place as a relevant negotiating body, immediate action must be taken. My delegation stated on several occasions its position that the commencement of the fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations is the next logical step for advancing nuclear disarmament and preventing proliferation. We hope that the work of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group will also contribute to advancing the discussion in the Conference. Further efforts are needed to achieve universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It is our duty and responsibility to work together to maintain this issue high on the international political agenda, while raising the awareness of our publics to the unquestionable benefits of the Treaty and its verification regime for international peace and security.

Romania is committed to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in accordance with the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in a way that promotes international stability based on the principle of undiminished security for all. This is the reason why we advocate a progressive approach and an inclusive disarmament process that can effectively lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons, maintaining the viability of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Treaty has stood the test of time remarkably well. It is charting a clear path and we fail to see any other viable options. The current review cycle of the Treaty brings both challenges and opportunities and it is only up to us to strive for a successful second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference. At the same time, we must recognize that the review process is a forum not for politicizing different aspects but for reviewing the implementation of the Treaty and the sanction instruments of our collective security, including by continuing the implementation of the 2010 action plan.

We fully support the ongoing efforts of the Chair of the second session of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador Adam Bugaiski of Poland, in the endeavours to achieve a successful outcome and a coherent review cycle. Without efforts to minimize the divisions, there is a serious risk that the 2020 Review Conference will be faced with another failure, which could eventually lead to the erosion of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

As we are facing important non-proliferation challenges to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, this is also a clear reminder that our work should focus on creating the security conditions necessary for progress in nuclear disarmament.

To sum up, Mr. President, it is time to leave the rhetoric behind and commit ourselves to taking real action enabling the Conference to comply with its mandate and contribute to efforts to achieve international peace and security.

Ms. McCarney (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I congratulate you on your new position and assure you of my delegation's support. I also take this opportunity to extend to all colleagues my best wishes for 2018, and I welcome Ms. Nakamitsu.

I wish to begin by assuring all delegations of our continued flexibility on all the agenda items and our willingness to consider other topics of importance to international security and disarmament, so long as they are relevant to the Conference on Disarmament and there is no overlap between the work of the Conference and that of other organizations. At the same time, we seek to incorporate a feminist perspective into all our discussions.

In 2017, the Conference devoted a great deal of time to considering national positions on all the agenda items through the working group on the way ahead. These discussions were instructive and varied and suggested opportunities for progress on the basis of this approach. However, there was no consensus on these opportunities and, once again, we remain no closer to the adoption of a programme of work.

(*spoke in English*)

We are profoundly disappointed with yet another year being wasted. Our delegation, as with all other members of this body, commits considerable time and resources to this enterprise, but decades of inaction have left us with little to offer but dispirited mechanical statements. Our concern, shared by others who have already spoken, is that this year we will see more of the same if we do not put our political will to the test.

To those delegations continuing to defend the utility of the Conference in its present form, we look forward to your concrete leadership and support of the work of the six Presidents to come.

There are initiatives which Canada believes can and should be advanced in the Conference and you will not be surprised to hear me say again that commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty is our priority and remains critical to many other States inside and outside of the Conference, as has been noted already today. It is regrettable that sustained and consequential discussions on a fissile material cut-off treaty have had to be conducted outside the Conference on Disarmament for some years. However, the impediments in the Conference to a fissile material cut-off treaty discussion have been constant; indeed, an alarming new one was floated last year, when progress in the Conference on a fissile material cut-off treaty was linked to taking action on prevention of an arms race in outer space.

We believe that linking agenda items within the Conference is counterproductive. And Canada supports ongoing discussion on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, but we have been clear that a treaty negotiation on this issue is premature and more work is needed to continue to build transparency and confidence among States operating in outer space. Linking these two items results in only one clear outcome and that is the continued build-up of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and thereby continued growth in the global nuclear weapons stockpile.

To end more positively, we do look forward to a successful conclusion of the work of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group and the opportunity that this can provide to spark actual negotiations on the treaty in the Conference.

I thank you, Mr. President and Ms. High Representative, for your challenging and considered opening statements and I wish you every success in 2018.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Canada and I now give the floor to the delegation of Australia.

Ms. Wood (Australia): Mr. President, I congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Australia supports your efforts to find common ground to allow us to fulfil our mandate as the sole negotiating body on multilateral disarmament and thus contribute to international peace and security.

I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, for being here at the opening of this year's Conference and for her wise counsel and encouragement.

Mr. President, Australia has an abiding interest in working towards the ultimate goal of a world without weapons of mass destruction. Over the next 10 years, the world will face new proliferation challenges due to emerging technologies with weapons of mass destruction and conventional applications.

Terrorists continue to seek weapons of mass destruction to cause mass casualties. Technological advances make developing bioweapons easier and cheaper. Chemical weapons are again being used, as seen recently in Syria. The Democratic People's Republic

of Korea continues to develop its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programme. Proliferation networks, including for missile technology and small arms, threaten the security of the globe, including in Australia's own region, the Indo-Pacific.

Australia advocates a patient, pragmatic approach in a complex security environment. Part of that is ensuring that we use all the tools at our disposal. The Conference is part of our toolkit to strengthen global security and make our community safer, but it has not been effective for many years and bona fide efforts to agree a comprehensive and balanced programme of work have not been successful. There are many theories about the Conference's years of deadlock, but arguing endlessly about why takes us nowhere. We need political will to find areas of agreement on where we can make progress in a way that takes account of the security interests of all States. We need to listen to each other and deepen our dialogue and understanding.

I offer a few modest suggestions for consideration and I would also note that some of my colleagues, Ambassador Baumann, Ambassador McCarney and Ambassador Bard, have spoken in a similar vein. We need to build on the work of previous Conference sessions. In this vein, we welcome the President's initiative for an informal dialogue next week and we welcome collaboration among the Presidents for this session.

Last year's session of the working group on the way ahead was a welcome step towards improving continuity. We need to avoid being trapped by process and be wary of doing things the same way just because it has always been so. The rules of procedure are there for a good reason and the consensus rule protects the interests of all countries, but we need to use it responsibly. We should have the courage to reinterpret what would constitute a comprehensive balanced programme of work. To insist, as some do, that we need to negotiate on all four core issues is fanciful. Would we even have the resources to do more than one negotiation at a time? How do we leverage the work of the Conference on Disarmament from other disarmament architecture like the United Nations Disarmament Commission, which is a deliberative body? While we need to take into account important differences between deliberations and negotiations, the process is not linear. The United Nations Disarmament Commission has made recent strides forward in achieving consensus that we could learn from.

Negotiations require solid groundwork, technical and political. Much of this work is taking place in various expert groups; how much better if we could have those detailed discussions in the Conference on Disarmament! At the very least, we should establish strong linkages between each group of governmental experts and the work of the Conference. That relationship must be symbiotic. The High-level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group will finish its work mid-year and such work is invaluable groundwork for negotiations.

We need to value and promote diversity in the Conference: diversity in delegates and diversity in the countries active in this body. This can be an intimidating room and we need to create an atmosphere where we are prepared to listen to diverse voices.

The pipeline of people who will work on international security and disarmament is being created now and, if we want good people in this field, they need to see that this is a dynamic and creative forum, where women and men contribute equally to making our world safer. I have been keeping a little list and I am very pleased with the gender balance in speakers this morning.

Australia will continue to engage positively to find common ground and build consensus. Progress may be incremental and frustratingly slow. But, through dialogue, listening and debating beyond our talking points, we build understanding and trust.

The President: I thank the representative of Australia for her statement and particularly her very pertinent questions, which I hope will inform us and keep coming back to us as we go through these sessions through this year.

I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

Mr. Herráiz España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I am pleased to congratulate you on assuming your new responsibilities at the helm of this Conference, a

task for which you can count on the full support of my delegation. We are also pleased to welcome the new Ambassadors from Ireland, Italy, Mexico and Peru and we are grateful for the words of encouragement addressed to us today by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu. We also fully endorse the statement made by the European Union.

My country is convinced that the multilateral system and the United Nations play a fundamental role and therefore wishes to reiterate its support for this key institution in the architecture of disarmament in these particularly delicate and uncertain times for the global security landscape. As the previous President of this body, I had the opportunity to reflect with you on the conclusions of the last session of the Conference and their possible impact on our future work this year.

In our conversation, Mr. President, and having acknowledged the value of the substantive discussions held by the working group on the way ahead, we noted the prevalence of low expectations when thoughts turn to the current complex strategic environment and the major differences of opinion that separate the members of this forum when it comes to the main issues on the agenda. We have to be realistic and steer clear of any naivety, but at the same time we cannot allow ourselves to be overcome by frustration and passivity. We are well aware of the remaining barriers to the adoption of a programme of work with a mandate to negotiate treaties. At the same time, we do not believe that there would be any benefit in an academic exercise of merely repeating the discussions that took place last year, even though they proved very useful, as I have mentioned already.

A practical solution could be to begin by discussing the broad outlines of a future negotiating mandate, giving priority to a creative and flexible analysis of alternative proposals concerning the most delicate issues before us. This would prevent any frustration at the failure to achieve a specific mandate to negotiate treaties and avoid the repetition of technical discussions from the recent past. It would be desirable to provide greater technical and political added value, focusing on the more specific factors that, owing to their sensitive nature for the security of some States, ought to be discussed in greater detail.

Consensus must stem from a genuine search for shared criteria for the achievement of a purpose, for the success of an objective, drawing on the necessary political will and a constructive and flexible spirit of compromise. Our priority is to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty, in the hope that the High-level Expert Preparatory Group can present its findings this year. We understand that the so-called Shannon mandate allows for a flexible interpretation, so that these efforts can be pursued in a manner that is as constructive as possible and satisfactory to all parties.

Negative security assurances are also an interesting alternative that relies on respect for strategic stability and the principle of not compromising security for all. In the current climate of tension, it would be useful to foster a favourable environment with transparency measures that might allow possible future progress on disarmament issues to be more ambitious. We view the area of verification as a possible field of action in which to establish a fundamental basis for mutual trust. The work to be begun this year by the Group of Governmental Experts created pursuant to the General Assembly resolution constitutes a positive starting point in this endeavour. We will shortly be holding the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, an instrument that we believe should be carefully preserved, since it is of cardinal importance for global stability. We are aware of the major challenges faced by this Treaty across all its three pillars and of the additional difficulty posed by the protracted impasse in negotiations within this Conference.

Against this backdrop, our conclusion is clear: it is essential to strengthen the credibility of the multilateral disarmament system by taking practical steps and visible initiatives that enable us to face the future with a sense of hope and in keeping with the step-by-step approach that we uphold in the face of other, maximalist positions on nuclear disarmament.

Fully recognizing that there is now no possible justification for nuclear tests, we again call on all countries listed in annex 2 to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to ratify the Treaty so as to secure its immediate entry into force. We also call on the United

States and the Russian Federation to establish and strengthen new measures to build confidence and promote transparency and verification, to extend the New START Treaty as soon as possible and to preserve the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which is a crucially important instrument for security in Europe.

To make the Conference more inclusive, we advocate a reasonable expansion of its membership, this being an issue that should be examined at regular intervals. The fact that 27 States have applied for membership since 1982 continues to demonstrate the interest generated by this forum.

I would also like to mention the grave threat to international peace and security posed by the rise in the number of nuclear tests conducted and ballistic missiles launched by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which my country has repeatedly condemned and which is in violation of numerous Security Council resolutions.

We are pleased to note some recent progress in the high-level dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, a process that should lead to a future strengthening of regional stability and mutual trust. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon completely its nuclear and missile programmes so as to ensure the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful means.

On a separate note, and lastly, my delegation wishes to support the continuation of all possible efforts to ensure a satisfactory implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed with Iran. The success of the Plan should be an objective shared by the international community as a whole, in the interests of nuclear non-proliferation in the region.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Spain as my immediate predecessor for his very valuable work during the process of the last Conference and for the many consultations we have had and I thank him for his expression of support for the work and will assure him that myself as well as the presidencies to follow will try to make the best out of the hard work he and other Presidents of last year put in.

With that, just an organizational point, it is 12.20 p.m., we go on till 1 p.m. I have on my list Belgium, Japan, Italy, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, United Kingdom, Belarus, Netherlands, Indonesia and Chile. So we will clearly run into the afternoon. I do not know that there are any delegations that would prefer to skip and speak in the afternoon and any that are compelled to speak in this session, to be somewhat democratic about it and understanding about circumstances of individuals, but it is clear that we will probably not be able to finish the list. In the afternoon session, I have had to make some accommodation because of the Preparatory Committee for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, they are having some meetings and they requested some time in the afternoon. The compromise we have arrived at is that we will have a shorter session. We will have our session but a shorter session starting at 3.30 p.m. and ending at 5 p.m., so that gives them time before that and after that to conduct their consultations and it was felt all round that that was the best way.

So, unless any delegation informs me, I will go down the list as I have it, which is, next, the Ambassador of Belgium. You have the floor.

Mr. Muylle (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Mr. President, I wish you every success in your new position as President of the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of this new year, 2018. You can count on my delegation's full support. I also wish to welcome our new colleagues and I thank the High Representative for her statement.

My delegation fully endorses the statement of the European Union and wishes to make a few points in a national capacity. Belgium recalls that the Conference plays a central role as the international community's only multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. It finds the persistent deadlock in the Conference regrettable and remains committed to a resumption of substantive work in the forum. It is important that the Conference's successive presidencies this year keep striving to secure the adoption of a programme of work. In this regard, Mr. President, my delegation supports your idea of first conducting a stocktaking exercise of the efforts made in recent years. Yet such an exercise

will bear fruit only if we manage to generate the political will required to break the impasse in the Conference. This will be no easy task in the current security context. It is therefore important not to make the programme of work the Conference's only goal, but, in an extension of the work of the working group on the way ahead established last year, to give some thought, this year as well, to adopting the most specific approach possible — pragmatic but at the same time ambitious — that will pave the way towards the resumption of our work. This will necessarily require substantive discussion. My country stands ready to reflect further on the matter with you and the presidencies that will succeed yours.

It bears repeating that the Conference has a critical role to play in the area of nuclear disarmament. Belgium remains firmly committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We would wish to reach this goal in phases, as we consider that to be the most effective way to move forward. Such a phased approach involves mutually reinforcing elements. There have been recent initiatives to relaunch elements of this approach that have been blocked for several years, particularly the goal of achieving a treaty banning the prohibition of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We hope that the High-level Expert Preparatory Group led by Canada will succeed in formulating recommendations that will pave the way towards the launch of such negotiations in the Conference.

My country reiterates its commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This instrument is the cornerstone of our nuclear weapons policy and should be not only preserved but also strengthened. The Treaty is a collective endeavour. The fact that we all benefit from it means that we all share responsibility for it: a responsibility to ensure that the Treaty functions and that the aim of article VI is met in full. Despite the failure of the 2015 Review Conference, we still have the 2010 action plan, which constitutes a detailed guide to achieving real progress on the three pillars of the Treaty. The new review cycle got off to a good start last year. In that regard, we commend the work of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, chaired by the Netherlands, and wish the Polish Chair every success for the second session of the Preparatory Committee.

Belgium remains prepared to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. However, for reasons that we have already explained, my country cannot subscribe to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, both because, as a political instrument, it lacks the involvement of the principal stakeholders and because, as an instrument of disarmament, it lacks the preconditions that would make it effective as a verification regime for ensuring compliance and preventing violations.

In addition, since this Treaty stipulates its primacy over other international agreements, there is a risk of weakening some of the fundamental instruments of the non-proliferation regime and the support for these essential instruments, particularly the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons also proposes a safeguards regime that clearly falls below the current standard that we advocate. Now, although Belgium supports an approach of phased nuclear disarmament, the fact remains that we are not satisfied with the progress made in recent years. The last major agreement on nuclear weapons control dates back to 2010. Nuclear arsenals are being modernized. New nuclear capabilities are being developed, with potentially destabilizing effects. Nuclear-weapon States, particularly those with the largest arsenals, must act in accordance with article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Decisions concerning the effective reduction of all types of nuclear weapons must be made and should be combined with decisions aimed at reducing dependence on nuclear weapons in defence doctrines. The alert and decision periods for launching nuclear weapons should be extended in order to reduce the risk of an accident or an unauthorized strike. We all have a role to play in creating the conditions in which progress can be made towards disarmament. One aspect of that is to establish a suitable security environment. Another is to generate confidence.

As long as the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons under effective international control is not attained, negative security assurances would have to be the obvious drawback to any accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. There can be no doubt that a legally binding instrument will strengthen the status of security assurances.

This issue has been discussed in the context of the working group on the way ahead. We believe that such an instrument could take the form of an additional protocol to the Treaty or a separate multilateral agreement.

My country welcomes the fact that the verification of nuclear disarmament is high on the international agenda this year. The Group of Governmental Experts on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices is about to begin its work and the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, of which my country is a member, began the second phase of its work when it met in Buenos Aires. This shows clearly that the gradual approach has not lost its relevance.

Belgium reaffirms its support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It is committed to continuing to work towards its entry into force, which would be a key step on the path towards our common goal of a world free from nuclear weapons, in accordance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This is the approach that my country is taking as Co-Chair of the Article XIV conference. The nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have shown clearly the relevance and importance of the entry into force of the Treaty. It is not enough to condemn such illegal and provocative detonations. We need a legally binding and universal standard and an internationally recognized and effective verification mechanism. There is only one instrument that can guarantee a complete ban on nuclear tests. There is only one instrument that can detect these secret tests. There is thus no alternative to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and no short cut to a denuclearized world. This will require the entry into force of the Treaty. Over the next two years, Belgium will work in close partnership with Iraq to help create conditions favourable to new accessions to the Treaty. Our approach is intended to be inclusive. The annex 2 States, which are indispensable to the entry into force of the Treaty, have a special responsibility, but we will not forget the other States that remain outside the Treaty. We emphasize once again that accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should not be made dependent on the action of other States. We wish to raise awareness not only among governments and political decision makers but also among civil society. Special attention will be paid to young people, who are the opinion-formers of tomorrow.

I have already stressed the importance of confidence in and respect for existing instruments. In this context, we have concerns regarding the future of the Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, a crucial instrument of Euro-Atlantic security, and call on Russia to ensure full respect for its obligations and to engage actively in a technical dialogue with the United States. Belgium also reaffirms its unequivocal condemnation of the nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. These tests, in which multiple ballistic missiles were fired, threaten regional and international peace and security. The international community cannot give in to nuclear blackmail. Through the work of the Security Council, it must stand firm and united, not only in its reaction to this provocation but also by fully enforcing sanctions, which are an invaluable tool with which to induce the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to change course.

I conclude by reaffirming my country's full support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Plan of Action is producing real results. It is important to continue working towards its full and comprehensive implementation.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Belgium for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Japan.

Mr. Takamizawa (Japan): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate Sri Lanka and the other five countries on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament during the 2018 session, a very important year. I assure you of my delegation's full support. I would also like to thank Ms. Nakamitsu for the important remarks on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General. We also commend the secretariat for their support to the Conference.

Mr. President, last year, various approaches to nuclear disarmament were highlighted in this august body. It was also a year in which the international security environment became increasingly severe. Moreover, over the past two years the Democratic

People's Republic of Korea has carried out 3 nuclear tests and launched 40 ballistic missiles, including long-range intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the east coast of the United States. It has become evident that the nuclear and missile development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a grave and imminent threat to the international community.

In order to work towards the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, it is necessary for the international community as a whole to coherently cooperate and maximize pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

As we begin 2018, we are required to set the foundation in order to reinforce measures, rebuild trust and enhance cooperation among all States and to make substantive progress in nuclear disarmament.

Mr. President, I would like to focus on the Conference on Disarmament and pose two basic questions in this context. Question 1: why has the Conference, the only multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiating forum, stagnated for more than two years? I joined the Conference just a short year ago and have actively participated in the valuable discussions, but I also have a strong impression that many countries consider this deadlock "business as usual" or a natural state of the Conference, in which it cannot make progress. I believe that all 65 member States have a duty and a unique responsibility to concretely advance nuclear disarmament negotiations. What we need in order to move the Conference forward is a strong sense of urgency. If the impasse continues, action on disarmament elsewhere will strengthen and there is a danger that the Conference will start collapsing. Concrete nuclear disarmament efforts have already taken place outside the Conference. However, the Conference is the only forum where non-nuclear-weapon States and nuclear-weapon States can collaborate to advance nuclear disarmament negotiations. It is indispensable that each country responds constructively with an urgent sense of crisis that this is our last chance to overcome the deadlock.

In order to advance the Conference, we specifically need and urge agreement on the implementation of the programme of work. Our predecessors over the past 20 years have proposed many programmes of work, some of which were agreed upon or had nearly reached agreement. Therefore, I believe it is not necessary to begin our work this year from scratch.

I would like to pose the second question: why have not our efforts to agree on a programme of work been successful for a long time? Apart from the fact that each country has its own security environment and priority, it is mainly because we tend to consider programme of work proposals based on what I call the "exclusive method". To put it more simply, if a member State is not satisfied with a specific item, it would tend to say "no" to any programme of work that includes anything insufficient for them. However, if member States considered programme of work proposals based on an inclusive method, the situation might change. We could compromise by saying "yes" to the programme of work, which includes priority items of interest to each member State. Therefore, I would like to suggest that this year all the Conference member States consider the programme of work based on an inclusive method probably slightly beyond areas of convergence, exercising maximum flexibility, in a spirit of compromise. From this point of view, States are encouraged not to pursue one or two specific agenda items but rather to consider a wide and balanced agenda, taking into account each country's interests.

As for Japan, the fissile material cut-off treaty must be emphasized among the main four items, but we are ready to respond flexibly to the other agenda items, such as nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and negative security assurances.

Mr. President, it is also important to earnestly discuss a way to revitalize the Conference. It goes without saying that the Conference mechanism should adjust according to the needs of the challenges we are facing.

Keeping these two questions in mind, Japan will commit its utmost efforts in cooperation with this year's Conference Presidents, the secretariat and all Conference members.

In conclusion, it is expected that the Conference should achieve some positive developments before the United Nations Secretary-General announces the disarmament agenda. Collective action is really needed, with transparency and trust.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Japan for his statement and I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Italy.

Mr. Incarnato (Italy): Mr. President, at the outset, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your responsibility as the first President of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament. Please rest assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I would also like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her message, which we strongly welcome. As the newly appointed Permanent Representative of Italy to the Conference, I feel honoured to represent my country in this body and I look forward to working closely with all of you. In my turn, let me join the other delegations in congratulating and welcoming the new Permanent Representatives of Austria, Egypt, Ireland, Peru and Mexico.

Italy aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. Let me add some remarks in my national capacity.

Mr. President, Italy firmly believes that multilateralism and international cooperation are crucial for effective and long-term results in disarmament and non-proliferation. We remain engaged in promoting these values and approaches in all relevant forums. The current security situation — characterized by growing tension, new conflicts, arms proliferation and a fast-changing environment — adds a new sense of urgency to our efforts. To this end, the Conference remains crucial.

Let me be clear. We fully understand and share the sense of frustration stemming from the long stalemate in the Conference's work, which has been voiced so many times in this chamber. This deadlock, which has now lasted more than two decades, is deplorable. Nonetheless, we remain convinced that the Conference is an indispensable and unique body in the toolbox of the disarmament community, even though its potential clearly remains untapped nowadays. It is up to us to act in order to preserve and launch its role, allowing it to resume its substantive work.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation stand high on the Conference agenda and are among the priorities of Italy's foreign policy. In this framework, we continue to support the immediate commencement of negotiations within the Conference on a treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We are confident that, under the able leadership of Canada, the work of the High-level Expert Preparatory Group established by the General Assembly in 2016 will contribute to this goal and we look forward to its report later this year.

We would also support the resumption of substantive discussions on negative security assurances, within the context of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work, with a view to elaborating recommendations dealing with all their aspects, not excluding an internationally legally binding instrument. Both these initiatives would also represent practical steps towards the fulfilment of article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and would bring us closer to our shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Mr. President, the fast-changing security environment that I mentioned earlier brings us to face new and emerging issues, alongside our traditional priorities. As the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Michael Møller, reminded us, key to any discussion on peace, conflict prevention and disarmament is the question of how to channel scientific and technical advances for the common good. Therefore, we should ask ourselves whether the Conference could become the forum at which to address also the impact of emerging technologies, as well as other contemporary issues affecting international peace and security.

We believe that the Conference's agenda is inclusive, comprehensive and flexible enough to allow us to deal with potentially all relevant security issues. We remain open to

further exploring this path. In this regard, we believe that a more in-depth interaction of the Conference with civil society in its broadest sense — encompassing also academia, the private sector and industry — could make a key contribution to our work. We welcome the announcement of the organization of the third Conference on Disarmament-Civil Society Forum later this year.

Also, in view of the increasing tendency to take disarmament negotiations outside the Conference, today more than ever we are confronted with the concrete risks of the marginalization of the Conference, and ultimately of its irrelevance. The time to react is elapsing. Let us take up the challenge together. Not only do we have work to do and all the needed tools to attain our goals, we also have a proper set of incentives.

On the one hand, we are aware of the extremely positive results we can achieve when diplomacy works. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran, which we highly value, is an excellent example in this regard. We believe that the international community should continue to take every action to ensure that it remains a success story, as an essential tenet for regional and international security. On the other hand, the deteriorating security environment calls for renewed determination to advance our shared disarmament goals. In this respect, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes continue to be a growing source of concern to us. We strongly condemn them as clear violations of the relevant Security Council resolutions and a serious threat to peace and regional and international security. We reiterate our call for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon the development of all its existing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner and to return at an early date to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, and also to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Before concluding, allow me to stress once again that my country stands ready to work with all partners to advance disarmament goals and values, in the Conference on Disarmament and in all the other relevant forums, starting with the upcoming second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of Italy for his statement and once again welcome him to the Conference. Next on my list is the Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Allow me to begin by congratulating you on behalf of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea delegation on your assumption of the first presidency of the 2018 session of the Conference on Disarmament. It is also my hope that, under your guidance, the Conference will lay a sound basis for bringing about tangible results in its work this year, as desired by all members, and I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Mr. President, it is a centuries-old desire of humankind to live and develop in a peaceful world free from war. Since the Conference, the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, assumes an important responsibility to achieve this desire, the expectations of the interna.ional community for its role are growing as never before. In spite of various initiatives and continued efforts by many members of the Conference, it is regrettable to note that the Conference is still in stalemate after over two decades without any substantive progress.

The establishment of the working group on the way ahead and subsequent initiative discussions last year to identify common ground for a programme of work were an encouraging step forward in bringing the Conference back on track.

I take this opportunity to commend your predecessors last year for their hard work and valuable contribution to the work of the Conference. This year, the Conference has to overcome the current deadlock and make many breakthroughs in its work. This means that the adoption of a comprehensive and balanced programme of work based on a full consideration of the positions and security concerns of every member State remains a top

priority for the Conference. My delegation is ready to make a positive contribution to achieve these objectives.

Mr. President, although many decades have passed since the end of the cold war and we are now living in a new century, the military confrontation and the danger of war — the legacy of the cold war era — still exists on the Korean Peninsula. Last year, in particular, the situation of the Korean Peninsula drew international attention and, as the situation developed, it was clearly demonstrated who really desires peace and who is the main disturber of peace and stability. At the same time, it proved that the strategic judgment of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and its decision to strengthen its nuclear force, was absolutely the right choice.

As the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has clarified on several occasions, bolstering its self-defence nuclear force is the right choice in order to defend national sovereignty and protect its right to existence against the long-standing hostile policy and nuclear threat of the United States. However, the United States and its followers resorted to unprecedented military blackmail and sanctions by raising the issue of the legitimate rights and self-defensive measures of my country, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Insanity of such a kind reached an unprecedented level last year. The United States led a nuclear war exercise that kicked off at the beginning of last year and continued throughout the year, irrespective of the season, with a massive mobilization of strategic assets such as nuclear strategical bombers, nuclear-powered aircraft carriers and nuclear strategic submarines around the Korean Peninsula.

The United States even openly lashed out at international forums, using reckless and belligerent expressions like "fire and fury" and "total destruction" of my country, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, that shocked the international community and even spread rumours of possible war, thus pushing the situation on the Korean Peninsula towards greater tension. On the other hand, by abusing the Security Council, the United States fabricated and forcibly adopted four sanctions resolutions against my country, which seriously threatened its peaceful development and also the right to existence of its people. Never in contemporary history have such so many sanctions resolutions been enforced against a specific country within one year.

Last year, in defiance of highly intense sanctions and a blockade enforced by the United States and its following countries, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, my country, conducted a series of tests to perfect the national nuclear force with its own resources in a safe and transparent manner.

Thus the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at last came to possess a powerful and reliable war deterrent which no force and nothing can reverse. I am proudly saying that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear force is capable of frustrating and countering any nuclear threats from United States and it constitutes a powerful deterrent that prevents the United States from starting an adventurous war.

As a responsible and peace-loving nuclear Power, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will not have recourse to nuclear weapons, unless, I mean unless, hostile forces of aggression violate its sovereignty and interests, nor will it threaten any other country or region by means of nuclear weapons. However, it will resolutely respond to any act of wrecking peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

Mr. President, this year, the proactive initiative and sincere efforts of my Government resulted in a dramatic change in the situation of the Korean Peninsula. As you have learned recently, high-level talks were held between North and South regarding the twenty-third Olympic Games, followed by a series of measures to put into practice agreed items, which fostered an atmosphere of dialogue, reconciliation and cooperation between the two sides. However, contrary to such a trend towards détente, the United States is engaging in a precarious military manoeuvre by bringing its strategic assets to and around the Korean Peninsula under the pretext of security for the Winter Olympic Games. This is a dangerous act of throwing a wet blanket over the current positive atmosphere of inter-Korean relations, which could drive the situation once again into an extreme phase of confrontation. As our respected Supreme Leader, Master Kim Jong-un, clarified in his New

Year address, in order to improve inter-Korean relations and preserve the peace on the Korean Peninsula, the first and foremost issue is to ease the acute military tension between the North and the South and create a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula.

To this end, it is important to eliminate the key factor of tension on the Korean Peninsula. The reckless United States-led joint military exercises targeting my country, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, are obviously the key factor of the escalation of tension.

If the United States is sincere in its attitude of supporting or improving inter-Korean relations and committed to creating a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula, it should, rather than delaying, rather than postponing, completely stop the joint military exercises and all other nuclear war drills aimed at a pre-emptive strike upon my country, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains unchanged and firm in its position to improve inter-Korean relations and achieve peace on the Korean Peninsula, in conformity with the aspiration and demands of the whole Korean nation.

Some previous speakers expressed their concern about my country's programme of nuclear deterrence and its nuclear development, delivering the same message as you did in the past, and my message is also the same. Therefore, I do not want to reiterate my country's position on this because it has already been stated clearly on many occasions in the past. But I would like to advise you that, before expressing your concern, you should have to know or at least try to understand why a small country and a peace-loving people, the Koreans, have to develop a nuclear deterrent and a missile programme.

It is quite clear that, if there had been no hostile policy, if there had been no continued threat of invasion, attack and war, and no threat of a nuclear pre-emptive strike by United States against my country, for more than 60 years, my country, which has never attacked or invaded other foreign countries, would not have needed to develop a nuclear deterrent or a missile programme. If you really want, if we really wish for peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, you should ask the United States to abandon its long-standing hostile policy against my country and also stop the ever-increasing numbers of military personnel, joint military exercises and nuclear war drills on our doorstep by continually bringing in nuclear assets.

Mr. President, my country is committed to fulfilling its obligations as a nuclear Power and making every effort to build a just and peaceful new world. My delegation will do its utmost to render a constructive contribution to the success of the Conference's work this year.

The President: I thank the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for his statement. Next on my list for the day was France, which has asked to speak first in the afternoon, the United Kingdom, Belarus, the Netherlands, Indonesia and Chile. I have also had requests for the right of reply by the United States and the Republic of Korea. The interpreters, I understand, have been kind enough to allow us to go on until 1.10 p.m. Do we want the rights of reply in the next five minutes or could we push the whole session to the afternoon? The rights of reply now? All right. Let us take the two rights of reply and with that, our interpreters, please bear with us.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on assuming the Conference on Disarmament presidency and you have certainly my good wishes and my willingness, my delegation's willingness, to work with you, to help you achieve your goals for this session.

Mr. President, I am taking the floor of course to respond to the charges made by the representative of Pyongyang. First of all, it says that its decision to establish its nuclear weapons was the right decision. On the contrary, it was the wrong decision. North Korea is not safer today because of its nuclear forces.

In fact, these nuclear forces undermine its security. It charges the United States with abusing the Security Council. In 2017, we passed, in the Security Council, three unanimous resolutions further isolating and tightening sanctions on North Korea. This is a regime that

claims that it is under threat. It poses a major threat to the entire Indo-Pacific region. We have said many times: we will not recognize North Korea as a nuclear-weapon State. It continues to insist that it has a peaceful nuclear programme, a peaceful, responsible nuclear State. The United States will not recognize North Korea as a nuclear-weapon State. As I have said many times in this chamber, if the North wishes to return and be in the good graces of the international community, it knows what it has to do, it has to take steps towards denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. That is fundamental. Let me just say one last thing, Mr. President. The international pressure on North Korea is profound, it is intense and it will continue and efforts and initiatives to try to undermine that international solidarity against North Korea will fail. We have heard a number of countries in this room today, again, criticizing North Korea for its provocative actions and threats, so let me just say, let me just close by saying, that the United States commitment to its allies in the Indo-Pacific region is ironclad and we call on North Korea to take steps towards denuclearization, as it committed to do back in the 2005 Joint Statement.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the United States for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim In-chul (Republic of Korea): I will save my congratulatory words for later and I will stick to the right of reply. The nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are a clear violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and a security threat to the entire world. The international community has stated through multiple Security Council resolutions the clearest possible position that it will never accept the nuclear programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has to return to the path of denuclearization. With the clear objective of denuclearization in mind, we are making efforts to keep up the positive momentum of South-North Korean dialogue and will closely cooperate with the international community for the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue and for establishing lasting peace in the Korean Peninsula.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea. The Ambassador of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has asked for the right of reply and I think we have a very few minutes, but, Ambassador, very quickly before we have the interpreters take a break.

Mr. Han Tae-song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Sorry to take the floor again to exercise the right of reply to the United States representative's remarks. So, as I said already: same message, same reply. But what I want to emphasize is that, whatever the United States tries, whether it is maximum pressure or full blockade, it can never reverse the status of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a fully fledged nuclear Power. It would be a wise option for the United States to drop its anachronistic mentality, that is, to acknowledge the strategic status of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and find a way to coexist with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which now possesses a powerful nuclear deterrent.

The President: Thank you. I thank the interpreters for continuing to work the extra time. We will now adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting will be held this afternoon from 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. here in the Council Chamber. As I said, the timing has been amended to allow interested parties to participate in the informal consultations in preparation for the meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which will take place this afternoon. So I bring this meeting to a close.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.